

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 11-A

WASHINGTON TIMES
30 September 1986

Daniloff for what?

After 30 days of dithering and contradiction, the Reagan administration has contrived to liberate Nicholas Daniloff, the Moscow correspondent for *U.S. News & World Report*. The ransom payment is not disclosed, though it is safe to assume that the Soviets, who thrust an armful of incriminating maps into Mr. Daniloff's hands and then arrested him for espionage, will get back more than their maps and our gratitude.

As the AP's Barry Schweid says, the deal is "bound to involve freedom for Gennady Zakharov," the accused Soviet U.N. spy on whose behalf, it is everywhere acknowledged, the KGB took Mr. Daniloff hostage. Will Mr. Zakharov be tried? Will Washington relent on the 25 Soviet agents it ordered to vacate the U.N. spy nest in New York? Only time will reveal the horse-trading aptitude of our secretary of state. Meanwhile, several observations are in order.

First, when the Soviets take an innocent American hostage and then let him go, this constitutes no concession on their part. Moreover, as the administration has conceded from the start, any hint of "equivalency" would be intolerable since Mr.

Daniloff was the victim of a clumsy frame-up, whereas Mr. Zakharov was caught passing \$1,000 to his contact — caught red-handed, so to say.

Second, trading the two would in no way restore equilibrium, no matter how imaginatively the deal were dressed up. What has to be kept in mind is that the Soviets have committed two crimes — espionage in the case of Mr. Zakharov and kidnapping in the case of Mr. Daniloff. A prisoner exchange would restore the *status quo ante*, but justice is not served when the purse-snatcher flings down the purse and escapes.

Perhaps it is premature to be glum. After all, we have seen only the *quid*, not the *pro quo*. Yet it has to be assumed, as the AP's Mr. Schweid and nearly everyone else assumes, that the Soviets have not sprung Mr. Daniloff out of brotherly love, which means that they have exacted a price — ransom, if you prefer.

Whether the ransom is to be paid in one lump sum now or, as some fear, in installments at the Reagan-Gorbachev summit, the Daniloff kidnapping appears likely to cost, not the kidnappers, but us.